Vol. VIII. Numb. 28

THE OBSERVATOR.

On the Arrival of M. de Torcy, the French *King's Minister, with Proposals of Peace, to Holland. On the Talk that the Duke of* Anjou *refuses to quit* Spain; *and that the* French *King offers to abandon him. No trusting the* French *King's Treaties, except he be made uncapable to break them. The Opportunity we have now to reduce him to that State. His former Methods to break off the Dutch from our Interest. The Advice of an able Statesman in King* Charles *the IIds Time, on that Occasion, and for making Use of our Fleet, as the best way to humble the* French *King.*

From Wednesday, May 4. to Saturday, May 7. 1709.

Country-m. I Find now, by all our News, Master, that M. *de Torcy*, the *French* King's Minister and Secretary of State, is certainly come to *Holland*, with new Proposals of Peace; therefore I must crave some farther Discourse with you upon that Subject.

Obs. Do you hear any Thing of the *French* King's Proposals, *Roger?*

Country-m. People talk differently about them, Master. Some say, he offers to surrender all but *Naples*; others say, he would part with every Thing, but that he can't prevail with his Grandson, the Duke of *Anjou*, to abandon his faithful *Castillans*; so that he is resolv'd to live and die with them; and if he can't maintain his Footing in *Spain*, he will retire to the *West-Indies*. In the mean Time, they say, the *French* King offers to withdraw all his Troops from his Assistance, and to leave him to shift for himself as well as he can.

Obs. A pretty Sort of Proposal indeed, *Roger!* You may see what it is to grow old and gray-headed in Wickedness. The *French* King's want of Sincerity might easily have been perceiv'd by the Measures taken to recognize the pretended Prince of *Asturias*'s Title, which lays a Foundation for a perpetual Claim by the House of *Bourbon*, to the *Spanish* Monarchy, and by Consequence of endless Troubles to *Europe*. But supposing the Allies should agree to a Peace with the *French* King, on those Terms, and that they reserve to themselves a Liberty to make War upon the Duke of *Anjou*, to drive him from the *Spanish* Dominions; what Security can we have, that the *French* King will keep this Bait in with us, any better than he did with the *Spaniards* in his Contract of Marriage, and the Treaty of the *Pyrenees*, when he solemnly swore by all that was sacred, that he would give the *Portuguese* no manner of Assistance, directly or indirectly; yet, as I told you before, he assisted them at first under a Covert, and afterwards openly, by which he brought the *Spanish* Monarchy so low, that we see they have become his Prey?

Country-m. But they say he is old and infirm now, Master, and therefore is not like to give the World any more Disturbance; besides, he can't live long, by the Course of Nature.

Obs. Marius, who had been seven times Consul of *Rome*, did, when he became an old Man, so perplex the *Romans* during the Controversy betwixt himself and *Sylla*, as is sufficient to convince any Body, that we can promise our selves no Security from the *French* King's Age. Besides, *Roger*, he is of a strong and healthful Constitution, and was so drain'd of peccant Humours by his Fistula above 20 Years ago, that he may yet live a long Time; and he is so far from giving any Tokens of Repentance for his Perjury and Tyranny, Usurpations, and the Oceans of Blood he has occasion'd to be shed, that his Heart is harden'd like that of *Pharaoh*; and tho' the Plagues of God be upon him and his People, as we may perceive by the Famine, Want of Money, contagious Distempers, and Tumults in his Capital and other great Towns, we hear of every Day, yet there's no Sign of his relenting; which to me is a strong Proof, that God has design'd him to Destruction, as he did that old *Egyptian* Tyrant, except the Allies provoke the Almighty to withhold his Hand, by their Neglect of improving those Advantages which he has so visibly given them over the *French*, and to turn the Scale upon themselves.

Country-m. Blessed be God, Master, we are very happy in her Majesty's Conduct. She is for pursuing the Blow, and falling in with Providence, to humble the *French* King, as we may perceive by her Majesty's Order in Council, That her Ships shall take all such neutral Vessels as they find bound to *France* with Corn. If all our Allies would follow the same Measures, we might soon hope to bring that haught Tyrant to what Terms we pleas'd.

Obs. We have no Reason to doubt the Emperor's Concurrence, *Roger*, and for what I can hear, we may rely upon the Duke of *Savoy*; and since the *Dutch* refuse to treat without her Majesty's Concurrence, we have Ground to hope, that all the Confederates will continue faithful to the common Interest: But if any of 'em be staggering or divided with the advantageous Proposals made to themselves, since our Parliament has been so liberal of their Money for next Campaign, I cannot easily conceive it to be in our Power, by vigorous Efforts by Sea, for which our Fleet is in so great a Forwardness, to cast the Ballance as we please.

Country-m. I am sure 'tis our Concern, Master, on many Accounts; for we have born the greatest Share of the Burden, and if a dishonourable Peace be concluded, are like to bear the greatest Share of the Sufferings: For who will assure us, that the *French* King, and his Grandson, the Duke of *Anjou*, when once the Confederacy is broke, and that they have got a Time to breathe, will not send over the *St. Germains* Family with a Fleet and an Army, to give us another Sort of Visit than their last? Who can hinder them from sending some of the Millions they receive annually from the *West-Indies*, to arm and animate our Malecontents at Home, to join them? They have ruin'd our *Newfoundland* Colony, and some others already, have deprived us of that valuable Branch of Trade, and Nursery of Sea-men, and ingrossed it to themselves; and when once they are rid of the Confederacy, who can assure us, that they will not attempt to drive us totally out of the *West-Indies?* Therefore, Master, I hope our Fleet will do something to purpose ere this Campaign be over. We have the absolute Command of that in our own Hands, and need not stay for the Consent of Deputies of any Sort, how to act with them.

Obs. You say very well, *Roger*. There's no doubt 'tis our Interest to put our selves in a Condition to depend as little upon others as we can; and if we have been so complaisant hitherto as to humour any of our Allies, by carrying on the War in those Parts where the *French* King, by his Multitude of strong Towns, was most capable of making our Impressions, which has not only spun out the War

to a greater Length, but made it more chargeable than otherwise it might have been, I see no Reason that we should continue to do so still, but rather that we should chiefly direct our View at lessening the *French* King's naval Power, to out him of his Footing in *America*, to hinder his continual Supplies of Money from the *Spanish West-Indies*, to recover what we our selves have lost in *Newfoundland*, &c. and in a Word, to push him so on all Sides, that he or his Successors may be made uncapable to support the Pretensions of the *St. Germains* Family, or of the Dutchess of *Orleans*'s Line; and this I take to be the Interest of the Confederates, as well as our own, tho' it may be not to the same Degree; for if *Great Britain* and *Ireland* come once to be in the Hands of a Government devoted to the *French* Interest, the Ballance of *Europe* is absolutely lost, and all *Christendom* must submit their Necks to the *French* King's Chain. 'Twas the Sense of this which made the House of *Austria* and the *Dutch* join with us in dethroning the late King *James*, because they knew they could not be safe so long as *Lewis* the XIVth and he liv'd in a good Correspondence, and were in a Condition to pursue the Ends of their private Leagues.

Country-m. By all this it seems plain to me, Master, that we ought not to listen to any Proposals from the *French* King, 'till we be sure he is made uncapable of attempting any Thing against the common Liberties of *Europe*, and our Protestant Succession, as by Law establish'd; for since the whole Conduct of his Life has been one continu'd Proof of his Treachery, and that he is not to be bound by any Oaths, Leagues, or Contracts, our greatest Security must be in his Want of Ability to break them; therefore you and I have all along argu'd for reducing him to his ancient Boundaries before the Treaty of the *Pyrenees*, and for pulling down his exorbitant Power, by retoring his States, which would be an effectual Curb in his Jaws, and lay him or his Successor under a Necessity of conquering his own People at Home, before they could think of invading their Neighbours; and if he would not agree to this by Treaty, which there's no great Probability he will, I think his present Circumstances, and the general Dissatisfaction of his Subjects, with this ruinous War, puts it in the Power of the Confederates (if they be all honest) to force him to it; and we have no Reason to doubt of the Concurrence of his own People, could we once break thro' the Inchantments that have hitherto kept us from effectually entring his Country; for being now so sensible of their Danger, by his continuing the War, no doubt they would be glad to be restor'd to their ancient Privilege of having their Consent requir'd in Parliament, before he should engage in a new one, and to be deliver'd from the Slavery of being tax'd and forc'd to bear Arms at the Pleasure of a single Person, merely to carry on his ambitious Designs. But I am afraid, Master, the *French* King has Encouragement some way or other to expect a Compliance, since he has sent a Minister of State to *Holland*; for I can scarce think he would have humbl'd himself so far, without a Prospect of Success.

Obs. That must be left to the Determination of Time, *Roger*. 'Tis natural for him to use his utmost Endeavours to procure Peace; and we may be sure, that Bribes and Promises will not be wanting, where he thinks they can have any Effect. You and I may both remember, that in our King *Charles* the IId's Reign, after the *French* King had join'd with that Prince and the Bishop of *Munster*, against the *Dutch*, *Lewis* the XIVth join'd afterwards with the *Dutch* against us; and we have as much Cause to remember, that during the Reign of the late King *William*, the *French* King prevail'd with a certain Prince in the Alliance to break off from it, and to become General for him in the same Campaign, when he had been General for the Allies. We are also inform'd, *Roger*, by a valuable Piece, entitl'd, *A free Conference, touching the present State of* England, *both at Home and Abroad, in order to the Designs of* France, printed here by King *Charles* the IId's Authority, in 1668. and licens'd by the Earl of *Arlington*, then Secretary of State, 'That 'the *French* will always be ready to buy dearer the Amity of the States of the united Provinces, than ours; 'and that they had then made more advantageous Pro'posals to the States, than to us, and solicited them to 'recombine with *France*, in order to their old Design of 'dividing the low Countries mutually between each o'ther, to the entire Exclusion both of us and the *Spani*'*niards*, pag. 55 and 56. So that the *French* King is thoroughly vers'd, *Roger*, in the Art of debauching Confederates against him; and tho' we have no Reason to fear, that he will succeed in the like Attempts now, or to doubt of the Fidelity of those two Powers above-mention'd, yet this ought to put us upon our Guard, and upon doing something for our selves, without depending altogether upon others, or lessening our Efforts in the *Netherlands*; and in my humble Opinion, the Proposal of the able Statesman, who was the Author of that *free Conference* above-mention'd, pag. 66. seems to be as good an Expedient as any, *viz.* 'That the Jealousy alone 'which our Fleet will give the *French*, must needs o'blige them to employ the better Part of their Troops to 'furnish their maritime Coasts, and consequently render 'them the weaker every where else: And I am sure his Reason is much stronger now, than 'twas then, *viz.* 'That *France* is a Body replete with ill Humours, 'which will easily degenerate into an universal Corrupti'on, when they are ever so little shaken.

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☞ I do hereby publickly declare, That I neither directly, nor indirectly know any thing of the Letter Mr. Marten the Surgeon pretends was sent him, and which he has made publick in several News-papers; but do believe, if any such Letter came to his Hands, (tho' I am rather inclin'd to believe he forg'd it himself) it was sent by some Patient or other of his, that had been two or three times flux'd by him to no Purpose, but a very ill one, and was afterwards cur'd by my Royal Deception; some of whom I have heard rail at him in Terms much like those contain'd in the Letter. I also farther declare, Mr. Marten belies me, in terming me a Pearl-driller; for I never did, nor do know any thing of that Trade, but have been a Practitioner in Physick above 40 Years, and brought up under one of the ablest Physicians in Brabant. For these harsh Expressions, I appeal to the Candor of all the Professors of Physick and Surgery, all of whom he has abus'd in Print, either in general or particular, whether I ought not to make this Return for the many scurrilous and false Aspersions cast upon me, after I had us'd him like a Gentleman? But his Advertisements shew him to be none. John Smelser

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